The Queen's Head — Critical Fabulations (Set 1)

Method statement (for dissertation & archive): Each vignette is a speculative reconstruction grounded in archival traces. Axes (Transmission/Jurisdiction) follow Chapter 3. A 'Trace(s)' line lists motivating records and, where available, a permanent Internet Archive (IA) identifier link. Composite figures are anonymised; quotations avoided; emphasis on atmosphere and practice.

Linking protocol for traces

Use IA identifiers to create stable, citable links. For items already uploaded, links point to https://archive.org/details/<identifier>. For not-yet-uploaded sources, a planned identifier is provided; replace it with the final slug once created.

CF-01 | 2011 | The Queen's Head, Brixton | Transmission: Repertoire | Jurisdiction: Below | Method: Critical Fabulation

Load-in is a choreography of apologies. A flight case wedges the door; a cable snakes across taped floors. Someone counts off and the first bar splutters, more hum than note. A dozen faces lean in, inventing a beat with their necks until the amp coughs itself awake. A jacket is thrown over a bare bulb so the room falls one shade darker and the song finds its shape.

Trace(s): Trace(s): IA: https://archive.org/details/queens-head_fat-white-family_live-videos_set-1_c2012-2013 (Bomb Disneyland; Wet Hot Beef; c.2012–2013)

CF-02 | 2012 | The Queen's Head, Brixton | Transmission: Repertoire | Jurisdiction: Below | Method: Critical Fabulation

Tuesday night, half rain and half cigarette fog. The band tries a new one at talking volume; the snare is a suggestion rather than a command. A dog noses the kick drum, unconvinced. Someone at the bar writes the chorus on a napkin so it will not vanish on the walk home.

Trace(s): IA: https://archive.org/details/queens-head_slide-in_lou-smith_photogallery_capture_2012-03-03 (web capture of Lou Smith's "Slide-In @ The Queen's Head, Brixton"; date: 2012-03-03)

CF-03 | 2012–2013 | The Queen's Head, Brixton | Transmission: Repertoire | Jurisdiction: Below | Method: Critical Fabulation

Practice upstairs at talking volume. Tea towels soften the snare. The bass is a line drawn in felt. Someone stops the take to count bars on their fingers. The radiator ticks. Cables cross the floor like a map. The room learns the song before the crowd ever hears it, and by the time the chorus holds, everyone is already humming.

Trace(s): IA: https://archive.org/details/ten-thousand-apologies_queens-head_excerpts_scan_2025-09 (file: 2022_Stripe-Saoudi_Ten-Thousand-Apologies_QH-selected-pages_scan_21pp.pdf; p.: 155–156)

CF-04 | 2013 | The Queen's Head, Brixton | Transmission: Repertoire | Jurisdiction: Below | Method: Critical Fabulation

The door takes coins by consent rather than policy. The pot funds strings, tape, dinner for someone who has not eaten. A stranger is waved in on the promise that they will dance. They do.

Trace(s): https://archive.org/details/queens-head_slide-in_vice-feature_2014-01-14 (VICE feature on Slide-In; date: 2014-01-14)

CF-05 | 2014-10-31 | The Queen's Head, Brixton | Transmission: Repertoire | Jurisdiction: Below | Method: Critical Fabulation

Masks arrive before sense does. For an hour the street is a theatre of wrong jokes and quick exits. By midnight, the room has learned that some costumes are not disguises but weapons. The music cuts early and the night refuses to resolve.

Trace(s): IA: https://archive.org/details/queens-head_halloween-2014_evening-standard_2014-11-03 (Evening Standard web capture; date: 2014-11-03)

CF-06 | 2014 | The Queen's Head, Brixton | Transmission: Repertoire | Jurisdiction: Below | Method: Critical Fabulation

Soundcheck becomes the show. A bass line loops while cables are coaxed into obedience. The room agrees on a tempo by breathing together. Someone tunes to the fridge's thrum and prefers it that way.

Trace(s): IA: https://archive.org/details/queens-head_fat-white-family_live-videos_set-1_c2012-2013 (Cream of the Young; Wild American Prairie/COY; c.2012–2013)

CF-07 | 2015 | The Queen's Head, Brixton | Transmission: Repertoire | Jurisdiction: Below | Method: Critical Fabulation

There is talk of a refurb that sounds like a translation error. The regulars inventory the fixtures as if remembering a face: the black banquette with a nick like a small country; the ceiling stain that maps a storm that never quite happened.

Trace(s): https://archive.org/details/queens-head_urban75-thread_capture_2015-2024 (file: *2015-09_to_2016-11_Urban75_Queens-Head_thread_page1_capture.pdf*; posts dated 2015-09-15–2015-09-18 on closure/last night & refit)

CF-08 | 2019-02 | The Queen's Head, Brixton | Transmission: Repertoire | Jurisdiction: Below | Method: Critical Fabulation

Opening week of the vegan turn. The room smells of citrus cleaner and ambition. Menus speak three dialects of sincerity; the pint list disavows its past. A couple takes photos of the ceiling where songs once gathered like steam.

Trace(s): IA: https://archive.org/details/queens-head_urban75-thread_capture_2015-2024 (file: *2015-11_to_2024-05_Urban75_Queens-Head_thread_page2_capture.pdf*; posts around 2019-02 linking Brixton Buzz vegan relaunch)

CF-09 | 2024-05 | The Queen's Head, Brixton | Transmission: Repertoire | Jurisdiction: Below | Method: Critical Fabulation

Boarding dulls the acoustics of the street. Behind plywood, the old black paint remembers sweat in its grain. Passing cars edit the night into dashes. You try the door out of habit; it answers with the small refusal of good timber.

Trace(s): IA: https://archive.org/details/queens-head_first-visit_photos_2025-07-09 (files: IMG_8847–IMG_8856.JPEG; key views: IMG_8852/8853/8856; date: 2025-07-09)

CF-10 | 2024-12 | The Queen's Head, Brixton | Transmission: Archive | Jurisdiction: Above | Method: Critical Fabulation

Daylight inside: chalk arrows on plaster, notes about pipes and wires written in a neat hand that never played here. The future is measured in diameters and drops, the route of a rainwater pipe drawn like a staff line with no melody yet.

Trace(s): IA: https://archive.org/details/queens-head-brixton_24-02657-DET_discharge-of-conditions_2024-12 (file: DETAILS_OF_EXISTING_AND_PROPOSED_SERVICES_REV_C.pdf; p.: 2–4)

CF-11 | 2025-05 | The Queen's Head, Brixton | Transmission: Archive | Jurisdiction: Above | Method: Critical Fabulation

A sash window is proof argued in rails and stiles. The drawings promise like-for-like: slimline double glazing set into timber sections that are said to match. Profiles are traced, meeting rails, glazing bars, horns. Fidelity becomes a measurable virtue, but the room that once thickened behind the glass is asked to accept equivalence on paper.

Trace(s): IA: https://archive.org/details/queens-head-brixton_25-01771-FUL_application-bundle_2025-05 (file: PROPOSED_WINDOW_DETAILS.pdf; p.: 1–2)

CF-12 | 2025-07 | The Queen's Head, Brixton | Transmission: Archive | Jurisdiction: Above | Method: Critical Fabulation

Refusal reads like a eulogy written by measurements. The officer wants more of the past on paper: photographs of what already exists, sections of what will replace it, the promised fidelity itemised. The file closes; the street keeps its counsel.

Trace(s): IA: https://archive.org/details/queens-head-brixton_25-01771-FUL_application-bundle_2025-05 (file: OFFICER_REPORT_REFUSAL.pdf; p.: 3–5; Decision-Notice_REFUSE.pdf; date: 2025-07-22)